

## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING –MAY 10, 2005

The Annual Town Meeting for budget consideration was called to order by the Town Clerk, Joan E. Gerdson at 8:00 p.m. in the Mansfield Middle School Auditorium. The Town Clerk read the warning of the meeting and stated who was entitled to vote at the meeting. She then requested nominations from the floor for Moderator.

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson moved to nominate Mr. Stephen Bacon as moderator. Seconded by Mr. Schaefer.

Hearing no further nominations the Town Clerk announced that Mr. Stephen Bacon would be the Moderator for the meeting by acclamation.

Mr. Bacon requested that the meeting be conducted by Robert's Rules of Order. So moved and seconded.

By voice vote it was adopted by meeting. Further more he asked each speaker to keep remarks to three minutes.

Mr. Bacon recognized Mayor Elizabeth Paterson who thanked the town staff who had worked with the Council on this budget. She urged support of the budget which was unanimously passed by the Town Council.

Mr. Bacon recognized Mr. Carl Schaefer, Finance Chairman on the Council who introduced the adoption of the following resolutions:

RESOLVED: That the proposed General Fund Budget for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006 in the amount of \$28,792,740 which proposed budget was adopted by the council on April 25, 2005, be adopted and that the sums estimated and set forth in said budget be appropriated for the purpose indicated.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-51, the proportionate share for the Town of Mansfield of the annual budget for Regional School District No. 19 shall be added to the General Fund Budget appropriation for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006 and said sums shall be paid by the town to the Regional School District as they become available.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital Projects Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006 in the amount of \$3,315,500 be adopted provided that the portion proposed to be funded by bonds or notes shall, at the appropriate times, be introduced for action by the Town Council subject to a vote by referendum as required by Section 407 of the Town Charter.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital and Non-Recurring Reserve Fund Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006 in the amount of \$1,832,840 be adopted.

Seconded by Curt Beck

Discussion by Mr. Schaefer who spoke to his motion.

The General Government overall budget expenditures have increased by 5.9%. There are a variety of factors contributing to this increase, including increased costs for energy, insurance and the establishment of a consolidated municipal department of fire and emergency services. The town has implemented several adjustments that were recommended by its new classification and pay plan. The Town has restored the funding for a few key programs that was reduced two years ago when revenue was more constricted. For instance, the town has restored hours on Thursday nights. Within the Department of Public Safety we have restored part-time shifts in order to provide a greater police presence on days and evenings that are more prone to traffic and criminal activity. There are added funds for a shared maintenance position with the Board of Education. Because this is the first year of a property tax revaluation, the proposed tax rate will actually decrease by nearly 30 percent. However, the problem in a revaluation year is that there are factors such as trends in sales, market values, which cause some increases to be much larger, and some did not increase at the same rate relative to other properties.

Under the Capital Fund Budget the major items will include public safety equipment, educational equipment and minor repairs, public works equipment and road repairs and community services projects. \$1,000,000 is designed to replenish Open Space acquisition program. There is a proposed \$1,000,000 bond issue for the Community Center to expand the programming space over the teen center area and to air condition the gym. There are also funds for Southeast park improvements.

The CNR Fund Budget includes transfers to the Capital Fund, Debt Service, Management Services, Property Tax Revaluation Fund, the General Fund, a payment toward the purchase of two fire engine tankers, a contribution for the Daycare pension and a subsidy phase-in for the Community Center, which is the final year of a three-year commitment. Because this is the first year of a property tax revaluation, the proposed tax rate will actually decrease by nearly 30 percent from 30.93 mills to 22.01 mills. Of course there is always the concern over how much in funds we will get from the State. This town relies heavily on grant monies. Because the state has not finished its' budget we cannot be certain as to the exact figures of our anticipated revenue. Usually the Town Council sets the mill rate after this meeting, but we may not be able to do that until we hear from the state. The point of the revaluation is to maintain equity between homeowners and to keep track of real estate values. It is hard to tax a property without knowing what it is worth. The three units of government have collectively reduced the original budget as submitted by about \$400,000.

Mr. William Simpson, Chairman of the Mansfield Board of Education, thanked everyone coming out tonight to vote on the budget. He thanked the residents and the Town Council for their support for education. The board does take into consideration the impact of the budget on the taxes. There have been several initiatives in the past years those include: technology, elementary class language program, an expansion of the enrichment program, and an early intervention in the reading program. The board feels that full day kindergarten this year is another step, which improves what we can offer the families in

town. This is an educationally sound thing to do. It offers staff opportunity to work with half the number students. It will give them twice as much time to offer their programs, and to reinforce skills that can only be done in a full day of school. It will allow for a more relaxed atmosphere, more time for creative activity, more time for children to develop their own interests, and more time to have child-to-child interaction. This will support those families, which still prefer a half-day program. The board's budget tonight totals nearly 18.3 million dollars after we trimmed the \$185,000 requested by the Town Council. The cost for full time kindergarten is \$394,000. 2.2% of the budget. The cost to the median taxpayer in town only \$74.00 per year. We feel the investment in our children and in our community is well worth this small-added cost. Plus with the possibility of a windfall coming from the state coming our way, much of the impact could be mitigated. He urged the voters to pass the budget.

Mr. Tim Elder, 1017 Warrenville Road. Concerned over the Board of Education's share of this budget. All day kindergarten provides free daycare. If the town does provide daycare it should be on a sliding scale. Concerned over the labor negotiations of the Instructional assistants. These assistants have a new union. The board of education has been negotiating last year's contract for sometime. After 8 negotiating sessions the BOE and the union agreed to go into negotiations. The BOE cancelled the last mediation session. And although informal talks with both sides have continued, the next formal step is binding arbitration. Binding arbitration is expensive. It costs up to \$1,000 dollars a days in lawyer fees, and it could drag on for as long as year. Quite possibly the BOE may spend \$300,000.to settle. Why not settle now? Eliminating all day kindergarten might however provide a real savings. So I think we should avoid spending money at a tough time with something that has not demonstrated educational utility.

Mr. Charles Eaton, 89 Lorraine Drive. Tonight's vote is very confusing and what we have gone through the last few months has not really been well communicated, in large part because of revaluation. Spending many hours in the Assessor's office myself, I saw many persons, especially seniors very distressed and asked me what I could do. I am not here tonight for myself, my taxes will actually go down. A number of Town officials are also concerned. The shift is away from the newer areas to the older/smaller homes. Mr. Berliner said he thought about a door-to-door campaign to explain to those people so that they can be saved from foreclosures or other dire needs they have. You cannot have the shift go away. The burden is on the residential taxpayers, not those in apartments or those who just have automobiles. The 7.6% percent in the BOE is three times the rate of inflation. I have been a longtime supporter of the education budget. But taxpayers who are already burdened with the high taxes of this town cannot be burdened with additional taxes for additional programs. Money needs to be trimmed off. 1990-91 year was the year to do the right thing. Why now when the BOE itself was split for kindergarten 4 to 3.

Amendment: I, Charles Eaton of Mansfield, Connecticut, move that the fiscal year 2006 Board of Education budget be reduced by \$394,000. Recognizing that, pursuant to Connecticut State Statute 10-222, the Board of Education has the discretion to expend the dollars it is appropriated, this amendment comes with a strong recommendation to the

Board of Education that this reduction be made to the planned all day kindergarten program and all of its applicable expenditures totaling \$394,000.

Tim Elder second.

Point of Order asked of the Moderator, how is voting to take place? How or what can you vote on, only up and down total or what?

Moderator stated that in C405 "This meeting shall consider the budget presented to it by the Council and may approve or lower any item, but may not raise the amount of such item. Amendments should be limited to specific dollar amounts, and you must be specific that it is the Board of Education budget.

The motion on the floor is that the fiscal year 2006 Board of Education Budget be reduced by \$394,000.

Moderator asked for clarification of motion by Mr. Eaton. Your amendment provides in part that the recommendation be made to the Board of Education regarding how to apply the reduction. You seem to recognize in your motion that there is a state statute, which applies to the discretion of the Board of Education it exercises in respect to any reconsidered budget. It would seem appropriate to me and most germane for your amendment if it were limited to simply state that the reduction to the Board of Education budget would be \$394,000.

Mr. Eaton stated that he would accept that revision.

Discussion on amendment followed.

Ginny Francoise, 267 Maple Road. I am a former kindergarten teacher and speak in favor of all day kindergarten. Defeat this amendment.

Jeannette Picard, 72 Timber Drive, I am a teacher in another district and have two children and have lived here for twenty years. She spoke in favor of all day kindergarten. The money will be paid back ten fold by our children. Defeat this amendment.

Steve Pringle, 52 Maple Road, spoke in favor of full time kindergarten. Education is not cheap, but we live here because we get quality education. Raise my taxes I will pay them. Children deserve this opportunity for early childhood education. I strongly recommend that we defeat this amendment.

Joan Buck, Timber Drive. Urged persons not to vote for this amendment. Education is a priceless investment in the future. I feel strongly that the full day kindergarten supports the school readiness program. All the research supports the need for full day kindergarten. This has been studied for two years. There is strong support for full day kindergarten in Mansfield.

Sondra Morrison, 37 Farmstead Road, Agrees with all that has been said about all day kindergarten, but would like to back off and see what our fiscal situation is going to be. We don't know how the revaluation assessment will affect us; we don't know how much money we will be getting. Most of our generation kids survived quite nicely on the half day kindergarten. The idea of some children going half day and some going full day is not a good idea. Some people can go out and earn an additional \$74 per year, but there a lot of older people who cannot. Let's wait and see before we have this new program.

Renee Miller, 24 Holly Dr., urged people to listen to our professionals, our teachers. Listen to our students, our parents, our friends. Don't listen to the literature against full time kindergarten. My child would have benefited from a full day program. Put full time kindergarten in this year. This needs to happen this year. Give me the option to have a full time program, not just the half time one we have.

John Roulier, 19 Fellen Road, I am not going to badmouth half day or full day kindergarten. The amendment is to reduce the budget to be one closer to inflation costs. I have to live within my means and a 7.4 increase in funding is too much. I do not get that kind of raise. I hear that there may be money from the state to bail us all out, but the State gets its money from your pockets. I am highly supportive of education but lets be reasonable. The budget should be reduced.

JC Martin, Crane Hill Road, supports education and paying more taxes, but we must remember those people who are not here. We do not want the elderly having to move out of their homes.

Joe Tomanelli, 45 Stone Ridge Lane, spoke on education. Education if done right, is not a social gathering, and it is not a full day day care. Opposed to the amendment.

Deborah Pacik, 339 Mansfield City Road, spoke against the amendment. She does not want a daycare but a full day kindergarten program with strong educational goals. Her son attended a full day kindergarten in Wisconsin and greatly benefited from it.

John Vampatella, 16 Woodmont Drive, said he as proud to be parents of kids at Vinton. Studies have shown that there is no long-term benefit for full day kindergarten. Since there is so little room at the schools, we will need more room. There may be a price to be paid perhaps in 2,3 or 4<sup>th</sup> grades. This may have a negative effect on our kids.

Rob Gildersleeve, 61 Chatham Drive. Spoke in favor of full day kindergarten and against the amendment. There is a great need for socialization at that age so that children will have better self-esteem and a sense of success. It is a good idea to have full day kindergarten.

Derin Temel, 45 Adelaide Pl, spoke against the amendment. To refer to Kindergarten teachers as a day care provider is an insult. These teachers are professionals. We are a

one-income family so we do not need daycare. What we need is an opportunity for our child to attend full time kindergarten; we need to support this program,

The question was called on a motion by Mr. Stevens of Hanks Hill Road and seconded.

The motion has been made and seconded to call the question and stop the discussion.

Voice vote Moderator could not tell if it was a clear 2/3 vote.

Moderator called for a standing vote.

Ayes had it by opinion of the moderator.

Question now is voting on the amendment.

Point of order by Carol Pellegrine.

Method of voting questioned.

Carol Pellegrine moved that the people vote by paper ballot. Seconded.

Vote on question whether or not there will be a paper ballot.

Voice vote. Motion was defeated.

Tim Elder called for a Division. Standing vote must be done.

Standing vote taken. Moderator determined that a motion for a paper ballot was defeated.

Voice vote on the following amendment:

That the Board of Education Budget be reduced by \$394,000.

Voice vote taken.

Standing vote called for by the Moderator.

Moderator determined that the amendment was defeated. Board of Education Budget will not be reduced.

Vote was challenged and has been seconded.

Debatable motion

Redo vote, tellers would take count of people.

Sustain the chair or not

Bruce Clouette spoke and stated that if the maker of the motion withdrew it, there could be another motion to ask for an indisputable tally by the Moderator.

There were counters appointed.

Vote is on the Adoption of the following amendment: that the Board of Education reduce their budget by \$394,000.

All in favor were asked to stand. 118

All against the amendment 188

Amendment did not pass.

Jeffrey Green 170 Atwoodville Road representing his mother who could not be here tonight. The new assessments are so high. I support the teachers, but spending must stop, somewhere. The construction projects, magnificent salaries for the teachers, law enforcement, leaders in Connecticut. Who are we driving out of this community? Consider those who don't always speak out, they are the ones who can least afford the taxes.

Susana Joebel, 44 Constitution Square, Thank you for being here, I love to see democracy and hear everyone. I opposed the amendment. I support fulltime kindergarten. We must prepare the youth of today to meet the future. We need preparation in math, writing and reading skills. I am concerned over taxes. However if there is a choice of a million dollars for air conditioning over education of my child, I will choose education.

Kurt Schletter, 19 Boulder Lane. We looked for a town, which was more cost effective, and we chose Mansfield over Glastonbury and West Hartford. This is a town that has become Glastonbury, it is a time bomb. The schools are at capacity. The time bomb is 5 years from now; we'll need millions more. My kids went to half day they are great students. Parents should take responsibility for the children, educate your children. More and more we are relying on the state to educate our children.

Sherry Goldman, 187 Browns Road, moved the budget be reduced by \$10,000. She strongly recommended that it come from the Education budget. This represents a statement of principle for me. The instructional assistants contract has been negotiated for over a year now. Starting salary is \$9.03. Are we competing with WalMart? I hope not. Seconded.

Called the Question and seconded.

Voice vote.

Moderator stated the debate closed by voice vote.

Question is now on the amendment. That the budget is reduced by \$10,000.

Voice vote.

Moderator declared that the nays had it. Motion is defeated.

Moderator stated that there could be discussion of the main motion.

Call the question. Seconded.

Voice vote-to call the question and close debate.

Ayes had it by the Moderator. The discussion is now closed.

The Moderator said the next vote would be on the main motions by voice.

Moderator asked for a standing vote.

In Favor of the main motion which is the entire budget for 2005-06

Tally by counters

In favor 205

Against the budget 78

Moderator declared that the budget passed.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was accepted and was seconded.

Unanimously approved by voice vote.

The Annual Town Meeting adjourned at 9:59 p.m.

Stephen Bacon, Moderator

Joan E. Gerdson, Town Clerk



